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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001983

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/02/2013

TAGS: [AEMR](#) [AMGT](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [CVIS](#) [EFIN](#) [ETRD](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: TFIZ01: AMMAN SITREP 25 (4/02 2000 LOCAL)

REF: A. (A) AMMAN 1954

[1](#)B. (B) AMMAN 1981

Classified By: Pol Couns Doug Silliman for reasons 1.5 (B)(D).

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General Overview  
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[1](#)1. (C) The Embassy operated on a normal schedule 2 April. Consular services were open. Activities at the American Language Center remain suspended, and there was only restricted activity by FSN's at the Peace Corps office. Movements of American staff remain restricted.

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Consular Issues  
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[1](#)2. (U) No new issues.

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GOJ Actions/Statements  
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[1](#)3. (U) No new issues.

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Security  
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[1](#)4. (U) No new issues.

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Economic and Trade Developments  
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[1](#)5. (C) Rumors in the QIZ community allege that a closure of the northern border crossing with Israel (Shaykh Hussain Bridge) that began 4 days ago is related to war with Iraq. The Embassy verified with authorities at the bridge, the Trade Ministry, and freight forwarders that the closure is not/not security related, but is instead the result of strikes by government workers in Israel. We have been in contact with Trade Ministry officials about this issue, and they will be contacting QIZ exporters and park managers to assure them that the closures are not related in any way to the war. Trade Ministry officials caution, though, that their Israeli counterparts predicted the strikes could continue for some time, which would negatively impact QIZ operations in any case.

[1](#)6. (SBU) Although volume was heavy on the Amman Stock Exchange Wednesday, the index closed down slightly by .33%.

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Refugee/Humanitarian Issues  
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[1](#)7. (U) The Jordan-Iraq border remains open. IOM reports that a total of 7 TCNs arrived from Iraq on April 1; there have been no TCN arrivals since 1200 am today, April 2. One person with document problems currently is being held in no-man's land at the border. No sign of Iraqi refugees/asylum seekers. UNHCR reports that khamseen winds are stirring up some sandstorms in Ruweished.

[1](#)8. (U) IOM reports that current TCN transit camp population is 279, including 66 children under the age of five. Roughly 100 camp residents are likely to remain in Ruweished indefinitely. This group includes the Somalis & Sudanese who have said they don't want to return to their countries of origin but have been found not to meet UNHCR criteria for refugee status, as well as the 18 stateless Palestinians. IOM is working with the Jordan Red Crescent Society and NGOs to revise camp management procedures to accommodate this group of long-term residents. IOM is repatriating TCNs in "drips and drabs" on commercial flights from Amman.

[1](#)9. (U) IOM/Amman confirmed that the number of total TCN arrivals reported by IOM/Cyprus is inaccurate, as it includes the thousands of Jordanian students who have returned from their studies in Iraq. According to IOM/Amman, total TCN arrivals in Jordan since the onset of hostilities is 712,

with 444 TCNs already repatriated.

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Press  
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110. (U) Once again, Jordanian dailies led with reports and photos of the progress of the war. The anti-war sentiment continues to manifest itself through photos of civilians killed, including children and infants. A photo showed a man who "lost 15 members of his family." Al-Rai's headline read that the King called for an immediate stop to the war. Headlines and captions talked of "massacres" and called to "save Iraqi children."

111. (U) In response to the letter by 99 personalities (ref A), Al-Arab Al-Yawm carried a counter letter signed by 104 personalities, expressing their total satisfaction with the King's leadership (ref B). This theme also occurred in the commentaries of a number of writers in Al-Rai and Al-Dustour. Nevertheless, two editorialists, Mahmoud Al-Rimawi in Al-Rai and Fahed Al-Khitani in Al-Arab Al-Yawm wrote that the original letter contained an accurate appraisal of the situation, which should not be "overlooked by the decision maker."

112. (U) Al-Dustour reported that more than 350 Jordanian factories have refused to deal with the amendment made to the "oil for food" program, which takes away the authority to manage the program from the hands of the Iraqi government and gives it to the United Nations. According to the press report, representatives of the factories conveyed this stand to the Iraqi Ambassador in Amman, stressing that they will not sign any contracts to export to Iraq based on the mechanism unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council a few days ago. An Iraqi diplomatic source told the paper that there are important ongoing contacts between Amman and Baghdad to prevent the implementation of this amendment. Al-Dustour also reported that Jordan and Iraq are looking into the possibility of transferring a big chunk of the contracts for Jordanian companies signed under the "oil for food" memorandum of understanding and making them part of the Jordanian-Iraqi trade protocol.

GNEHM